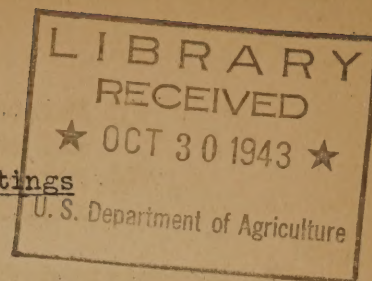


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United States Department of Agriculture  
EXTENSION SERVICE  
Washington, D. C.



Summary of Discussions at Regional Directors' Meetings

Memphis, Chicago, New York, Berkeley  
July - August, 1943

During July and August 1943, four regional meetings of State extension directors were held to consider current trends and situations affecting extension work and changes in policies, organization, and relationships which might be needed to make extension work more effective. These meetings were held at Memphis, Chicago, New York, and Berkeley in that order. Discussion centered on the following agenda distributed in advance of the meetings. Time did not permit full discussion of some of the points, particularly on financial and organization adjustments.

Theme: Where are we headed as an Extension Service?

Impacts and Influences Affecting Extension Work -

- I. Recent policies of the Federal Government, and what new policies and relations may need to be adopted in extension work.
  - (a) Policies relating to war food production and distribution.
  - (b) Policies relating to other governmental programs and agencies.
  - (c) Secretary's memorandum, February 11, 1942.
  - (d) Relationships and obligations to farm organizations.
- II. What influences are shaping our extension program? Are we meeting the larger needs of rural people? What administrative, supervisory, and organizational changes should be made to meet these needs?
  - (a) Are our extension workers giving too much time to purely service-type work?
  - (b) Problems hindering effective administration and supervision
    - (1) Do the traditional lines of extension work (county agent, home demonstration, 4-H Club) make for the most effective type of administration and supervision?
    - (2) How can we best coordinate administrative and supervisory functions?
    - (3) How may the work of our supervisors be redirected to help the agents organize their work more effectively?
    - (4) What changes have taken place in specialists' work, and what adjustments need to be made?
- III. What organizational adjustments can we make now to strengthen extension work?
  - (a) How shall our national and State Extension Services be organized to serve best the interest of our rural people?
  - (b) Adjustments in personnel, budgets, and finance.
    - (1) Worker security and satisfaction.
    - (2) Need for additional personnel - administrative, supervisory, specialists, county extension agents.

- (3) Policies regarding future requests for Federal, State, and county funds to strengthen extension work.
- (4) Extension's responsibility to nonfarm, rural and urban families.

IV. Formulate definite recommendations on each of the above topics for reconstruction of State extension programs.

It was hoped that conclusions arrived at during these meetings might be summarized and presented to the directors in the extension sessions of the land-grant college meetings in October 1943 and serve as a basis for developing recommendations for possible adjustments in extension work. A brief summary of the discussions and main conclusions developed at these regional meetings follows:

1. Recent policies of the Federal Government and what new policies and relations may need to be adopted in extension work.

- a. Policies relating to the war food production and distribution.

The responsibility of the Extension Service in the 1944 food production program is that of carrying to the farmer full information concerning the need for greater food and fiber production, and the method by which it may be accomplished to meet the goals established by the War Food Administration. The Extension Service should not assume the job of obtaining a farm sign-up if that is required by the War Food Administration. A "farm plan" approach which would permit Extension to do educational work on production needed and how farmers might plan to meet them was recommended.

The directors quite generally approved the request that Extension should take over the informational work required in advancing the AAA program.

Discussion of relations with War Boards brought out that county agents were giving a great deal of time to activities such as rationing, deferment, O.D.T., and other matters, at the expense perhaps of war food production and other work. A few directors would like to continue this work. In the main, however, it appears that the plan discussed by Director Hutcheson's committee with Mr. Chester Davis was considered better, namely, that a paid county executive secretary be employed for each War Board to carry out the directives passed down.

In general, there was need, it was felt, for greater clarification of area of responsibility of the AAA chairman and committeemen with reference to War Board matters.

b. Policies relating to other Government programs and agencies.

Because of the confidence local people have in the extension agents, built up through the years of work on production problems, the local people gravitate to the county extension office for information and help with the various administration programs. And the agencies more or less automatically seek the county extension office in advancing new programs locally. The figures of the amount of time and the number of office calls involved are revealing. Undoubtedly, some agents are giving too much time to such work, but the question comes up, as to how they may be relieved without rebuffing farmers. Some of the details they could very well not attend to. But a strong spirit of service work marks the average agent. No doubt much could be done by helpful supervisors who would assist the agent in evaluating various calls and also in organizing his time and that of his clerk to better advantage. The best relief would come, of course, with the employment of assistant county agents. Much more work could be done on the extension program proper, as well as with the war programs, if the agent were trained to organize and use a neighborhood leader system to the best advantage.

c. The Secretary's memorandum of February 11, 1942

The principles set forth in this memorandum still hold and should be more widely accepted by other agencies at work in the rural field. Perhaps it would be well if each of the other agencies has a similar statement of understanding, prepared with the Secretary's approval, covering its field and its work.

d. Relationships and obligations to farm organizations.

This subject received earnest and full consideration at all the meetings. The attacks on extension-- farm bureau relations, the proposal of Mr. Goss of the Grange to have Congress change the basic acts to prevent extension from using membership fees--all caused directors to feel that a very serious review of present relationships must be made and possibly some readjustments developed. The western group made the most positive declaration. They affirmed their support of the statement of policies and relationships contained in the statements of 1922, but said, "We believe, however, that the time has come when extension work should be supported entirely by public funds."

In the Midwest, it was brought out that a proposal to prohibit financial support from a farmers' organization would probably not be opposed by a majority of the States, because some of the States are already following the policy of using nothing but public funds in support of extension work. Some directors felt such a bill should be opposed because local extension funds were essentially a State matter and the States should be allowed to settle on a basis of self-determination and not by Federal direction.

Eastern directors suggested that "Any change in the relationship with individual farm organizations should be approached cooperatively and ally the interests of organized farmers throughout the country."

The southern directors indicated that "the policy of the Secretary in 1922 regarding relations in the field of farm organizations appears to be sound and should suffice to guide us at the present time."

"Whatever we do we must carry equal relations with all farm organizations. They must carry their programs on their own steam. It is not the extension responsibility to subsidize farm organizations. We should have in all States a sound relationship with all farm organizations, but we must not have them dependent upon Extension for life."

## II. What influences are shaping our extension programs?

### a. Are our agents giving too much time to purely service work?

The answer to this question quite generally was - yes. But suggestions for relieving the situation were not so freely offered. The many war agencies and war activities do require much time of the agent. One State relieved its agents from serving as secretaries of county War Boards. In general, it was felt that much could be done to correct the situation if the supervisors helped agents and clerks to differentiate and to organize their work better. Many of the newer agents have had very little training and help from supervisors. Many want to cover every detail of every program, make out every paper. As a result, the war food programs and other farm help programs suffer.

### b. 1. Do the traditional lines of extension work make for the most effective type of administration and supervision?

Unquestionably the three lines of county extension work must be brought closer together, the various programs be more closely related. There is a tendency for each line of supervisors to work independently of the others. In the smaller States, it is a question whether a distinct supervisor is necessary for each of the lines of work - county agent, home demonstration, and 4-H Club.

In the Southern States, it was felt that the white supervisors and white county agents need to take a more active part in directing the work of the Negro agents and supervisors.

### b. 2. How can we best coordinate administrative and supervisory functions?

The supervisor's work can be made most effective if they have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and administrative problems

and their relationships to the agents and specialists on programs of work. The supervisors should be given sufficient time to analyze and appraise the various programs that are carried on in the counties.

The supervisors are employed to handle administrative matters in the counties as assigned by the director and to assist agents in developing and executing the various programs that are carried on in the counties. The idea of one extension program should be dominant.

b. 3. How may the work of our supervisors be redirected to help the agents organize their work more effectively?

1. Supervisors need training in a broader concept of their job. Too often now they are trouble shooters and fence patchers. They must be responsible for seeing to it that the county agents have a sound and workable county program and plans and schedules for carrying out that program, and see to it that plans are followed.

2. They must meet more regularly with other supervisors and with specialists as well as local leaders in developing program and plans.

3. They must train the agent in developing and using local leadership, particularly now to organize and train neighborhood leaders to assist in getting people to adopt recommendations carried in the program.

4. What changes have taken place in specialists' work, and what adjustments need to be made? The specialist's field may not be of primary interest to a very large number of people, and his individual approach may not help the farmer get the best from his farm as a whole.

A coordinated approach is far more effective. In this several specialists of different lines use the problem rather than the individual project approach, each contributing his part to the solution of a problem. This requires considerable adjustment and broadening of the specialist's program and much closer coordination of the work of specialists, supervisors, and county agents.

There is need for some adjustment in the requirements made by the Federal office for the organization and planning of specialists' work. Projects are written on a subject-matter basis, and plans of work follow these despite the fact that more and more the work in States and counties is on the problem basis.

Federal specialists should be outstanding leaders in their field and serve as liaison persons between the Federal bureaus and the Extension Service. One of their primary functions is to be the medium of exchange of information from State to State on problems in their respective fields both with respect to methods and subject matter.

Within the State, relationships are often improved by having the heads of the college departments meet regularly with the State staff each month.

### III. Organizational Adjustments

- a. How shall our national and State Extension Service be organized to serve best the interests of our rural people?

Adequate personnel is needed in Washington, in the States, and in the counties, but we should be conservative and not set up useless personnel to get us into trouble later.

The Washington office should have sufficient personnel to permit persons with administrative experience to visit the State directors frequently to discuss their administrative problems and to bring decisions on policies and relationships from headquarters, and to keep the Federal office fully acquainted with field conditions as they arise in the States.

The eastern group recommended, therefore, that additional financial support be provided for the Federal office.

The Extension Service should be alert to make continual adjustments in its organization to meet new conditions and needs of rural people. This may call for structural changes. Most directors were of the opinion that if they had to start fresh with a new organization to meet rural problems of today, this would be radically different from the present organization. But they did not specify how.

#### b. 1. Worker security and satisfaction.

There are still six Southern States which pay extension agents a "salary" in which is included an amount for their travel, and often, office expense. When this allotment is deducted from the gross salary, the remaining net salary is about \$400 less than the average salary paid county agents the country over. The average salary of county agents is \$2,775 and of home demonstration agents, \$2,050.

The desirability of having retirement insurance in all States was stressed. One Midwest director said a sound retirement system, group insurance, and salary promotion for effective work, plus academic standing, were essential to establishing a feeling of security on the part of extension workers.

#### b. 2. Need for additional personnel - administrators, supervisors, specialists, county extension agents.

There was general agreement that the greatest need was for additional county extension agents. Some 1,000 counties are still without home demonstration agents. Assistant county agents are needed in many hundred counties to help take the load off of county agents, to make more farm contacts possible, and to help with club work. Additional Negro agents are also badly needed, while clerical help is an urgent need in many counties.

Some of the larger States need additional supervisors. A few States indicated a need for additional specialists; most did not.

Our records of March 31, 1943 show -

108	directors and assistant directors
25	county agent leaders
158	assistant county agent leaders
40	State leaders of home demonstration agents
98	assistant State leaders of home demonstration agents
56	State 4-H Club leaders
125	assistant State 4-H Club leaders
42	State and assistant State supervisors of Negro agents
<u>652</u>	total

The proposal to request emergency funds as detailed in the estimated budget of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  million, now soon to be reviewed again by the Budget Bureau, was approved.

Yet the directors pointed out that, on a long-time basis, the weakest link in adequate financial support of extension work appears to be on the State level. Therefore, the first effort should be to obtain State funds in proportion to funds of Federal and county origin.

The financial tables and studies presented by the Federal representatives elicited great interest. Time would not allow for adequate discussion, but it was evident that the directors would like to study these comparative figures as a basis for possible readjustments in their State and county budgets and personnel. They recognize that such adjustments must perhaps come slowly because of certain historic obligations. But undoubtedly there is a field here for more intensive study than has been given during the last few years.

Another big field which was recognized and which also would not be given enough time for adequate discussion was the field of developing a State program based not on subject-matter lines of college departments, but on the larger problems of a State. As expressed by the eastern group after much fuller discussion than at other regional meetings:

"It will be helpful if an agricultural policy can be determined for each State, county, and community, using some of the procedures followed in land use planning. Extension programs can be based on this policy with the plans of work growing out of this procedure. The work of supervisors and specialists can be built around this concept. Their functions will then follow naturally. The start should be made on a few fundamental things. The pattern of supervision should not be too broad but should be definite."

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